

Access, Equity, and Opportunity

We know what 4-H can do in the lives of young people. Now, more than ever before, we must ensure that 4-H serves all communities by providing equitable access and opportunity for all youth, volunteers, and staff. We must be aggressive in reaching unserved, underserved, and under-represented children and their families and in leveraging our extensive networks and technology to help people make decisions and solve problems.

Goal 1:

Extension and 4-H will develop an ethic of access and opportunity for all youth.

4-H After School Club (4-H ASC)

Situation:

Children need supervision after school while parents are at work. Parents with low or poverty-level wages cannot afford child care for their school-age children, ages 6 to 12. Children who live in low-income housing or are homeless may be at higher risk for participating in risky behaviors. Children who have strong interpersonal skills and support are less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as substance use, early sexual activity, dropping out of school, etc. Washoe County, in western Nevada, has a highly transient population, and certain schools have a particularly high concentration of low-income and transient families. Children at these schools benefit greatly from structured after-school activities, enhancing their academic performance and desire to stay in school. All youth benefit from relationships with caring adults. A guideline suggests that children need at least three to five caring adults in their lives. It may be difficult for children of single-parent families, parents who work two or more jobs and two-wage-earner families to have relationships with caring adults other than their parents. If children are home alone after school, their opportunities to develop, maintain and sustain relationships are lessened. Out-of-school programming staff can provide an added stable, reliable source of support for children's total development, as well as for their academic performance.

Program Description:

4-H After School Club (ASC) is an educationally focused program for low-income and homeless youth, ages 6 to 12, and their families. It is a comprehensive, multimethod program conducted in collaboration with other agencies. Its overall goal is to help approximately 300 youth each year learn basic life skills, including math, science, reading skills, conflict resolution, communication, self-responsibility, decisionmaking, social responsibility and good nutrition. The Search Institute Assets Model is used to reinforce resiliency in young people at risk, building on their internal and external assets and strengths. 4-H ASC builds academic successes by helping members complete homework in a positive, supportive setting.

The program—offered after school at three at-risk elementary schools and three public housing sites—includes nutritional snacks, educational activities and help with homework, including math, science and reading. All activities involve opportunities for youth to learn how to make choices, either individually or as a group. Education reaches out to the participants' families as

well, through a newsletter, “4-H ASC News,” written in both English and Spanish. The monthly newsletter includes seasonal topics and activities that encourage family health, fun and safety.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

Since the program’s inception in 1990, more than 2,000 children have participated in the year-round program. In 2001, 18 instructors were assigned to the program; an additional eight have been hired in 2002. Many teachers are University of Nevada education majors, providing caring adult role models and exposing youth to the university. One teacher, Lee Deburle, was named “Isuzu After-School Hero of the Year” after his nomination by an after-school student. In her nomination, she wrote, “I had a lot of fun with Mr. Lee. He helped me with my homework every day. He brought a dictionary and helped me find words I didn’t know. With his help, I did better on my homework.” Sustained funding, an indicator of stakeholder satisfaction, was found after the initial 5-year federal grant was obtained to develop, implement and evaluate the program. In 2001, nearly \$363,000 was secured to operate the program. Another stakeholder, Reno Housing Authority, has continued to provide funding, space and staff resources for the program since its inception.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

Students’ academic grades were collected during the initial 5 years of the program. Using the Wilcoxon Ranks Test, first- and fourth-quarter grades were compared. Kindergarten through second-grade students showed a significant improvement in reading grades. Third- through seventh-grade students showed a significant increase in their handwriting, music and physical education grades. Additionally, parents, 4-H ASC staff and students’ teachers completed the Social Skills Rating System for students in a pre/post manner. Trends were noted for an improvement in students’ social skills by parents, teachers and staff. T-tests of staff ratings showed a significant increase in students’ assertive skills. Staff and others have also observed a reduction of at-risk behaviors and aggressive conflict. Federal youth-at-risk program reviewers rated the program so highly it was included in two federal publications as a model program for youth at risk. During 2001, staff were trained in the use of the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale. To date, on three of the seven sub-scales, most of the staff and an outside observer rated the program a 5 (good), 6 or 7 (excellent) on a 1-to-7-point rating scale. In an informal followup with program alumni, comments were received such as, “This program made a real difference in my life,” and, “I am going to college because of this program.” Other alumni have entered the child-development field as a result of the program.

Resource Commitment:

External funding is provided by a Community Development Child Care Block Grant, Child Adult Care Food Program and Reno Housing Authority. Local partners are Model Dairy, the Washoe County School District and the Reno Housing Authority.

Collaborators:

Same as above.

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Base Program Areas:

4-H/Youth Development

Family Development & Resource Management

Nutrition, Diet and Health

Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE)

Situation:

On any given day in the United States, there are more than 2 million minor children with an incarcerated parent. Parental incarceration and related enduring trauma and separation interfere with child development, resulting in long-term outcomes including intergenerational incarceration. In Missouri alone, there are at least 13,000 incarcerated adults who have one or more children.

Program Description:

The LIFE program consists of two main components: 4-H activities and parenting training. The 4-H activities are held monthly at the Potosi Correctional Facility in rural Washington County. At the monthly meetings, children and their fathers work together on traditional 4-H club activities such as arts and crafts projects and other curricula-based activities that focus on subjects such as conflict resolution, substance abuse resistance, teamwork, and character development. Working together as a team on 4-H projects gives children an opportunity to show their fathers that they are able and intelligent, and provides fathers with an opportunity to show their children that they can provide capable and caring parental guidance. All fathers who participate in the LIFE program also attend monthly parenting skills classes.

The LIFE program was developed jointly in 1999 between the incarcerated fathers and local 4-H staff to address the needs of children of incarcerated parents. When a small but vocal group of community members opposed the program, two town hall meetings were held. During these meetings, youth and adults from local 4-H clubs and the State 4-H office testified on the importance of working with children of offenders. The meetings resulted in an even stronger grassroots effort to continue providing access and opportunity for *all* youth in Missouri, including those with incarcerated parents.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

The total FTE commitment to this project is .75, with a 4-H youth specialist and educational assistant working with a human environmental specialist to provide holistic programming. The LIFE fathers convene monthly parenting meetings on the third Wednesday of every month for 1.5 hours. On average, 12 fathers attend each meeting. The LIFE 4-H activities meetings are held on one Saturday each month. Each child attends an average of two (of three possible) meetings per quarter. This program has positively affected a total of 48 children. Transportation remains a challenge, with many children traveling long distances to see their fathers in the correctional facility. For example, one aunt brings her nephew/niece from Arkansas, a 300-mile round trip.

Program qualities that contribute to positive impacts on the children and youth who participate in the LIFE program include (1) The atmosphere at LIFE program 4-H meetings allows for a more natural interaction between parent and child than occurs in the regular visitation setting at PCC;

(2) The 4-H activities promote constructive interaction between parent and child; and (3) The parenting education component helps fathers improve their parenting skills.

Educational activities are planned according to the strict guidelines of the prison, as well as the unique needs of this underserved audience. Research-based materials used are varied, and include the following curricula: “Prison Patch,” “Building Strong Families” and “Family Times.”

The specific types of positive changes that fathers attribute to the LIFE program can be grouped into five categories: (1) Developing stronger parent-child relationships through discovery; developing mutual respect; with program activities that promote bonding. (2) Improving the lines of communication between parent and child; (3) Creating and reinforcing a sense of family unity; (4) Developing important life skills in the children; and, (5) Children’s improved behavior and academic performance.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

As a result of the LIFE program, it is anticipated that children who have frequent visitation with their incarcerated parents will benefit by having healthier relationships with their parents and will achieve higher scores on measures of well-being, IQ, emotional adjustment and behavioral measures. As a result of having the opportunity to experience 4-H activities in a nontraditional setting, children will develop leadership skills, assertiveness, social skills, self-control and awareness of others. One father shared his opinions about how the LIFE program and related activities contribute to the development of life skills among children:

Not only do I see a difference in him, but I see a difference in every child that participates in this program. All you have to do is just sit back. I’ve seen kids come into this program who were totally antisocial for the first couple of meetings, you know, because they are expecting the same kind of behavior as in the visiting room. My son is more assertive, I think. A little more outgoing, I think, because of this program. He takes his role as [4-H] secretary seriously. You know, he keeps roll, and does his thing there, and that’s important to him.

Resource Commitment:

The program is supported by a New Communities Project grant from the USDA-CSREES Children, Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) program.

Collaborators:

Missouri Department of Corrections, Lincoln University Cooperative Extension, Washington County Extension Council, Missouri State 4-H Youth Development Office and the Family and Community Resource Program (CYFAR).

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

4-H Youth Development

Leadership & Volunteer Development

Family Development & Resource Management

Bridging the Gap In Mississippi

Situation:

Mississippi ranks 50th in the national composite rank in the 2001 Kid's Count! Thirty-four percent of Mississippi's children live in poverty and the high school drop out rate is 12 percent. Mississippi youth are composed of 52 percent White; 45 percent African-American; 2 percent; Hispanic; and, 1 percent, "Other."

Program Description:

Bridging the Gap between Home, School and Community is an exciting program for Mississippi youth and families administered by Mississippi State University Extension Service. The program is provided with federal resources through the university land-grant system for children, youth, and families who are considered to be "at risk." Goals are to equip individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to meet basic needs and to lead positive, productive and contributing lives. Specific programs were established in Claiborne, Jefferson, Grenada, Harrison and Oktibbeha Counties.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

In its third year the Bridging the Gap program has continued to grow. More than 1,365 African-American high school youth in Claiborne, Jefferson and Grenada Counties obtained skills and knowledge in the area of workforce preparation. In all five counties, 1,613 youth ages 5 through 13, enhanced not only reading and math skills, but also those skills in personal development that will aide them against negative peer pressure and the ability to contribute to their communities. Program success continues to spread within each county and the county staff continues to be contacted by new groups interested in being included in this program.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

A significant statewide accomplishment was the establishment of 4-H clubs at all of the CYFAR-designated community sites, and the opportunity for the youth to participate in all traditional and nontraditional 4-H programs offered. This accomplishment was initiated during the first year of the project, obtaining increased sustainability through the second year. The project continues to increase in its third year with the establishment of four new clubs in Claiborne and Grenada Counties. More than 30 youth participated in the Community Pride Environmental Community Service Seed Grant Program at the Gaston Point Community Center and Bel-Aire Elementary School sites in Harrison County. Eight junior-aged CYFAR 4-H youth participated in the District 4-H Achievement Contest Day, representing not only their 4-H clubs, but the total Harrison County 4-H Program. They participated and placed in visual presentation and judging contests, met new friends and enjoyed various workshops throughout the day. Two senior CYFAR 4-H members participated in State 4-H Congress held at Mississippi State University. A Grenada County Gathering Information For Tomorrow (GIFT) program participant (teen mother) enrolled in the 4-H child-care project and competed at the state level during State 4-H Congress held at Mississippi State University. She is now a teen leader for her 4-H club, assisting the Extension 4-

H Youth Agent. For the majority of the Grenada County's Discovery 4-H Club at the Alternative High School, belonging to this 4-H Club is their first club experience of any type. These at-risk youth thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Community Pride Environmental Community Service Seed Grant Program. They provided Christmas baskets and caroling at one of the local nursing homes. A highlight for this club was the positive community recognition they received when they marched in the Grenada City Christmas Parade.

More than 1,500 youth and teens in Harrison, Claiborne, Jefferson and Grenada Counties were provided programming in workforce development. While younger participants began to learn how to develop self-esteem, to set goals and handle conflicts without resorting to violence, the teens obtained valuable information to develop job application skills with improved interviewing and resume-writing techniques. Incorporation of the Mini Society concept by Harrison County allowed youth to create their own society that brings the real world of work to these youth. An intergenerational program has been developed during this first year in Harrison County. "CYFAR FOXES," a group of senior citizens (that grew from two to ten) mentored the teens in the Good Deeds Community Center by providing them skills and knowledge about the world of work. The teens in return aided the "FOXES" in computer technology and skills. One of the "FOXES" serves on the State CYFAR Advisory Council each year, providing a wealth of knowledge and experience. Two of these "FOXES" have now purchased their own personal computers.

Resource Commitment:

This program is funded by the REE/USDA State Strengthening Grant of \$150,000. The Mississippi State University Extension Service matches with personnel from both state and county levels. They provide leadership and guidance in the areas of administration, and subject-matter research.

Collaborators:

Community collaborators—community center directors, elementary, high school and vocation teachers—are essential to the Bridging the Gap program. The project is guided by steering committee (state and county Extension professionals) and a statewide advisory council. The advisory council is composed of the steering committee plus representatives from each of the community collaborators and individuals with a vested interest in at-risk children, youth and families. These key community representatives also include our CYFAR FOXES, a senior group interested in learning computer skills, and principals from various school districts who want to help decrease the dropout rate.

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Base Program Areas To Which This Program Applies:

4-H Youth Development; Family Development & Resource Management
Nutrition, Diet and Health; Leadership & Volunteer Development

Literacy In Action

Situation:

The “Literacy in Action” (LIA) Summer Reading Camp is an outstanding enrichment program offered by the 4-H Youth Development area at Langston University in Oklahoma. Embracing the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* of 2001, signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, the 4-H Literacy area assumed the leadership for designing and strengthening its current literacy program. Limited Resource Youth in three underserved rural communities (Langston, Coyle, & Meridian) were the targeted audience. The LIA Summer Reading Camp is designed to help participants avoid academic regression during the summer by engaging them in creative, fun, adventurous literary experiences. Research shows that reading and writing as little as 30 minutes a day can help students become more successful in improving their academic skills and abilities.

Program Description:

The LIA Summer Reading Camp was designed to help students who have completed Kindergarten and grades 1-4 maintain their reading skills during their summer vacation. Participants met five days during a 6-week span and received reading experiences by rotating to the following four learning centers daily: (1) Recreational Reading—reading for fun and enjoyment; (2) Creative Writing—learning how to expand thinking skills and process and remember concepts; (3) Literary Growth—strengthening activities in phonics and language arts at grade-level reading; and, (4) Mathematical Evolution—engaging in grade-level math activities and games. AmeriCorps members from the Langston University Partner And Learner (PAL) program were trained by two Cooperative Extension 4-H Extension Educators to manage the learning centers. Two AmeriCorps members were public school educators who received training on the “Literacy First” approach, funded by the Oklahoma legislature under the 1997 Reading Sufficiency Act.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

Ten persons provided 4½ FTE educational instructions to the LIA Camp (two full-time, two half-time and six persons working less than half-time). The camp was offered a half-day for 6 weeks. (Eighty-two youth participated in the first phase of the program for 4 weeks and fourteen participated in the second phase for 2 weeks.) The program qualities included, but were not limited to, the following: community asset and capacity building; positive role modeling; character and citizenship development; career exposure; cultural enhancement; and, multidisciplinary team-building approaches. Age-appropriate literacy enrichment experiences were provided to the participants. Overall program support and appreciation were demonstrated by the overwhelming attendance of approximately 200 participants at the culminating Community Showcase.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

The Cooperative Extension Program via its 4-H Youth Development component administers the Literacy in Action (LIA) Camp and the Partner And Learner (PAL) AmeriCorps Program. Both areas worked together to provide a safe and structured environment for youth to have fun and learn about other subjects in a caring and loving setting. Community stakeholders united to maximize their resources in an effort that had not occurred in previous years. The LIA Camp partnered with the Sumartreclition (summer arts, recreation, literacy, and nutrition) AmeriCorps Program to offer a full day of learning enrichment experiences. Other partners included the -

Coyle Public School System (host-site school facility, bus transportation, grant for breakfast and lunch programs, custodial and cafeteria staff); the Oklahoma Community Service Commission Partner And Learner (PAL) AmeriCorps Program; the Oklahoma State Department of Education (breakfast and lunch program); The Department of Human Services (participants' scholarships); and, the Oklahoma Arts Council (professional and community artists).

Participants:

- Increased their exposure to selected age-appropriate information that is a part of the state-mandated P.A.S.S. (Priority Academic Student Skills) curriculum.
- Implemented the Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) Program and read at least 30 minutes each day.
- Received professional instructions on a variety of subject areas (creative writing, reading and math games, storytelling, buddy and competitive reading) and art-related activities (drumming, calligraphy, vocal music, theater arts, oriental brushwork and photography).
- Received instructions on safe and healthy nutrition and manners.
- Engaged in behavior modification, including character and citizenship development.

The written and oral evaluations from participants, parents and other stakeholders indicated that participants were glad to have access to a fun and educational program that provided opportunities for them to develop new skills, make new friends, increase their interest in reading and understanding of math and improve their social skills.

Resource Commitment:

The external resource commitments included:

Oklahoma Arts Council (Professional Artists) \$3,900

Department of Human Services (D.H.S.) scholarships via OAC \$3,450

*Oklahoma Department of Education (breakfast & lunch) \$4,000

Coyle Public School (bus transportation, school facility, custodial and cafeteria staff) and eight Community Volunteers (In-kind)

Collaborators:

Coyle Public Schools, D.H.S., Oklahoma Arts Council, Cities of (Langston, Coyle, Meridian), Langston University

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

4-H Youth Development

Goal 2:

4-H will invest in youth and their future by providing equitable access and opportunity to all communities.

Farm/City

Situation:

Historically, the Hartford School System has scored last on the state mastery tests, resulting in a focus on math and reading skills to improve these skills. Poor scores have also affected the curriculum in other school systems within the area.

Program Description:

To provide an opportunity for the students from schools within targeted areas that offer a minimal science program, the curriculum of the 2001 Connecticut Farm/City program, held as a 4-H Farm Resource Center Program, was designed for children in the middle grades to sharpen their science skills.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

Approximately 0.2 FTE committed to the program. Frequency and intensity of participation of audience varied, with highest level occurring during warm-weather months in the school year.

Collaborators:

City of Hartford School System

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

Agriculture, 4-H Youth Development

Project SAFE After School Computer Program

Situation:

Project SAFE (Strengthening Adolescents/Family Enrichment) is a program funded through the CYFAR (Children, Youth and Families At Risk) initiative. It focuses on developing and enhancing strategies for successful parenting in Paterson, New Jersey where 19 percent of the residents live below the poverty level. One of the goals of Project SAFE is to provide fun and educational activities for youth at risk. A member of the Project SAFE advisory board (Paterson Housing Authority) asked if an activity could be established for youth in the Alexander Hamilton Housing Complex. The after-school computer program was established because it addressed two

needs of youth in the housing complex: (1) the need for a positive activity after school and (2) a fun and educational activity that would interest youth.

Program Description:

The general goal of the Project SAFE After-School Computer Program is to increase computer literacy of youth residents of the Alexander Hamilton Housing Complex by providing hands-on computer training classes. Specific objectives for participants include (1) learning how to use computers for educational and recreational purposes (such as drawing, clip art and e-mail) and (2) using computers to develop skills useful in school and the workplace (such as word processing, recordkeeping, and researching information). Youth from the Alexander Hamilton Housing Complex participated in the After School Computer Program, conducted twice weekly in facilities at the Housing Complex during 8-week sessions. The Housing Authority provided a location for the program and Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County (through the CYFAR grant) provided the instructor, 3 computer systems, curriculum and supplies. This program included a Beginners' Track for youth with little or no prior experience in computer technology and an Intermediate Track for graduates of the Beginners' Track and for youth with some prior familiarity with computers and their uses.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

Twenty-nine youth participated in the program. Of these participants, 16 completed at least one of the sessions and graduated to the next level (*i.e.*, "Beginners" graduated to "Intermediate," and "Intermediate" graduated to "Intermediate II").

The Paterson Housing Authority was extremely pleased with the program because more than half the youth from the housing complex who enrolled in the program completed at least one session and graduated to the next level. Very few programs have this level of commitment by youth.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

After pre- and post-tests measuring impact, most of the students, after completing an 8-week session, showed an increase in their knowledge of computers (components, software, website and search engine). Also, students indicated an increase in the number of times they used the Internet.

Participants who completed the 8 week session also demonstrated a slight improvement in "classroom habits," based on their responses to the pre- and pos-test questionnaire and the observations of the instructor.

Resource Commitment:

Funding for the program was provided through the CYFAR grant initiative. Paterson Housing Authority provided the office space for the instructor and space for conducting the program. The Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders provided the funding to hire the part-time instructor.

Collaborators:

Paterson Housing Authority
Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

Family Development & Resource Management
4-H Youth Development

Education Bridge Builders AmeriCorps Program

Situation:

The mission of the Schenectady Bridge Builders AmeriCorps Program is to address the community's educational need specifically in the area of literacy. The Education Bridge Builders Program recognizes the paramount importance of the home and school connection. In order for students to succeed, their parents/caregivers need to provide stimulation and to support learning activities at home.

Program Description:

The program's ultimate goal is to connect school and home in helping school-age students become proficient readers by the end of third grade. The program began in October 1997 with twelve members serving 1,200 students. Today, the program has 16 full-time members who serve 1 elementary schools and more than 1,400 students annually. Each AmeriCorps member commits to 1 year of full-time service. In exchange for their commitment, they receive a modest living allowance of approximately \$9,000 per year, health care benefits, child-care benefits and an educational award when they fulfill the required number of service hours. Each member is assigned to an elementary school to work with students, Pre-K through third grade, on strengthening literacy skills. Many students participate in one-on-one or small group tutoring during the school day. After school, members implement programs developed with teachers to address identified needs of the particular school. Some schools have implemented homework clubs, reading clubs, leadership clubs and community service clubs. The members take an active role in identifying the needs of the school by planning appropriate activities for the students and recruiting volunteers. During school vacations, the members implement literacy activities at various community agencies, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, Girls Inc., the Schenectady Museum and local library branches.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

The Education Bridge Builders AmeriCorps Program will celebrate being named a Daily Point of Light, a national honor. The Daily Point of Light Award honors an individual or organization that makes a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. This honor recognizes the commitment by AmeriCorps members to give back to their communities through service.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

AmeriCorps members develop activities that families can complete at home to continue to strengthen literacy skills. Last summer, the members created a summer bag of learning for families. This bag included numerous tools such as an activity book designed by the members with simple literacy activities that could be done at home, at the store and in the car. These bags were seen throughout the city during the summer. Members also keep students' parents informed of progress and challenges. One member designed newsletters for parents that suggested book titles and ways to extend interest in a book after they finished reading it. During the summer, members assist with summer school activities for elementary students. Many develop summer programs to continue the development of reading, writing and speaking skills, such as a newspaper club and a theater program.

Collaborators:

Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County collaborates with the Schenectady City School District and the Schenectady Job Training Agency to implement this successful AmeriCorps Program.

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Base program area to which this program applies:

Family Development & Resource Management
4-H Youth Development

Goal 3:

The 4-H volunteer and staff community, at all levels, will be skilled and knowledgeable in interacting with children and families from diverse groups.

Building Character Statewide

Situation:

In 1998, a total of 125,608 juveniles were referred to Texas juvenile probation departments by police agency referrals, social agencies, parents, schools and the Texas Youth Commission. The number of incarcerated adults, individuals who abuse drugs, pregnant teens, and students exhibiting school violence drains precious resources from other needs.

During 1999, the Texas Cooperative Extension (TCE) held Texas Community Futures Forums in all 254 counties. Citizens across Texas gathered to discuss and identify key issues that needed to be resolved to improve the quality of life in their county. Two hundred nine counties identified youth issues as a high-priority concern. These issues included character, ethics, morals, pregnancy, drug education and job preparation. In addition, counties identified a high need for character education in families, schools and the community.

Extension has a long history of providing effective outreach programs in 4-H youth development and parenting education, and of working with coalitions of organizations to address local needs. Texans Building Character is a 2000-2002 statewide Extension initiative that has brought educational resources to bear on this stated need of Texas communities.

The importance of training in character development theory, program planning and resource development has been of critical importance, as evidenced by the more than 700 Texas Cooperative Extension agents and specialists who have been trained to deliver the Texans Building Character program at the county level. Agents formed coalitions with community organizations to deliver character education to young people and adults and trained other adults to serve as teachers for a variety of community groups and organizations.

Texans Building Character Program Goals and Objectives:

To train TCE agents and volunteers in 209 counties to plan, deliver and evaluate character education programs through eight program models: Schools, Livestock, Workforce, Sports, Youth-at-Risk, 4-H, Organizations/Agencies and Community.

To increase skills and build strong character in children, youth, adults and families across Texas. To date, Texans Building Character programs have been delivered to after-school programs; child care providers; schools; Teen Leader retreats and labs; contests; Parent/Leader Associations; 4-H clubs; inservice for teachers/counselors; Tech Prep centers; churches and Boys and Girls clubs.

Program Description:

Texas Cooperative Extension delegated initiative funding from the legislature to build a character education program that provides training to agents and volunteers across Texas counties. This 16-hour training provides background on the character pillars of CHARACTER COUNTS!sm, plus training on eight program models: school, 4-H, at-risk youth, workforce preparation, business, sports, community and mega-community.

Texans Building Character is a character education program that develops knowledge, skills and abilities that enable the learner to make informed and responsible choices. It involves a shared educational commitment that emphasizes the responsibilities and rewards of productive living in a global and diverse society.

Accomplishments and Impact:

From August 2001 to August 2002, county agents and specialists conducted 1,700 trainings reaching 56,812 individuals. County efforts by Extension staff to deliver programs in character to Texans have resulted in marketing the program to a wide variety of groups, potential program recipients and collaborators such as juvenile offenders, Boy's and Girl's Clubs, schools, churches, Family Community Education groups, parents, educators, County Commissioners, Extension Program Councils, 4-H leaders and clubs, as well as agencies such as the Texas Workforce Commission.

Since August 2001, county Extension professionals have trained 3,759 volunteers to initiate Texans Building Character programs in their counties, reaching more than 53,100 individuals across Texas. Evaluations show these individuals have developed skills in caring for others,

showing respect to peers and adults, taking increased responsibility for their actions, being more trustworthy, exhibiting citizenship and showing fairness in their actions.

In 2001, the Texans Building Character Response team developed the "Character Becomes You" Educational Activity Book, "Heroes for Life" partnership with Texas Extension Education Association and State Farm Insurance, "Quality Counts" Curriculum, and state-level "Texans Building Character" training.

Collaborators:

Texas Education Agency, Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Texas Department of Health, State Farm Insurance, Texas Association of Family and Community Education.

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Good Dogs Find Good Homes

Situation:

Dogs with behavioral problems often end up in shelters. Teens with behavioral problems can find themselves in Juvenile Detention. There is no funding and little time for animal shelter staff to train dogs. There are limited activities for kids behind bars.

Program Description:

This program meets the National 4-H Strategic Plan of providing equitable access and opportunity to underserved, diverse groups. The club pairs up Humane Society dogs with teens in a correctional facility. "Good Dogs Find Good Homes" was the brainchild of longtime 4-H Leader Gaile Haynes, who originated Alaska's first 4-H dog program. Working with five other volunteer leaders, she teaches incarcerated teens the basics of dog training. While most activities behind bars require that participants "earn" the right to take part through a point system, Gaile was able to make the Dog Club accessible to all. By working with the Youth Center teachers, they were able to incorporate recordkeeping into the English class curriculum.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

This is a volunteer program requiring minimal FTE involvement. The youth work with pups and dogs directly for 1 hour, three times a week. Club members are required to write a report after each training class, addressing eight different aspects of the session. The reports go into the Humane Society's *Dog Log*. Families adopting dogs have access to all training notes, which help them understand their pets more quickly. The club members have come to understand the writing as "real work," not just "homework." They have learned that what they do has a direct impact on their dog's quality of life. They take a great deal of pride in seeing their dogs find good homes. It is a natural consequence that the teens look at their own lives and make the connection that modifying their own behavior will affect their personal outcomes.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

Trained dogs make more appealing pets, and there has been a marked decrease in animals being euthanized at the Shelter. There are also far fewer pets waiting for adoption. The number of “dog returns” has gone down as well. The youth in the program have acquired marketable skills during their incarceration. They realize their training will enable them to pursue work in many areas, from show-dog training and kennel jobs, to dog-handling work in homeland security. The Gastineau Humane Society now employs two of the teens. The teens have learned many important life skills through the program. “These are kids who have had to shut down their emotions,” said Gaile Haynes. “They can see themselves in their dogs. When they talk about their dogs’ being scared about being in a new place, that opens a door to talking about their own feelings.” According to teacher Jo Dahl, the students involved with dog training seem calmer and less depressed. Their communication skills also improve. “You have to communicate with different dogs in different ways; humans are like that too,” she said. “You can’t control the dog with brute force. You have to meet them where they are.” Superintendent of the Johnson Youth Center, Greg Roth, feels that teaching empathy for other creatures is a key goal of the program. He hopes the lessons learned in patience and positive reinforcement will translate to their relationships with other people. Gaile Haynes summed it up: “I have been training dogs for over 50 years and I am amazed at what these kids have done. These kids haven’t had a chance to get positive rewards for positive achievement. My big hope is that they will be able to go out of JYC with the self-expectation that they can succeed.”

Resource Commitment:

None.

Collaborators:

Gastineau Humane Society, Johnson Youth Center

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Base Program areas to which this program applies:

4-H Youth Development

Health Rocks!

Situation:

Jefferson County covers 780 square miles west of Denver. The Jefferson County Public School District (JCPSD) is the second largest district in Colorado. The average nonwhite student population of the JCPSD is 17.54 percent, while the three elementary schools involved, Fitzmorris, Russel and Foster, report an average of 32.9 percent. They average 53 percent on the free or reduced school lunch program. Tobacco and drug use is common in these three schools. Youth who have personal social skills and competencies are more resistant to substance use. Ultimately, we want children who are already forming their opinions about tobacco, alcohol and drug use to take healthy control of these choices, and not make them because of peer pressure, stress and other emotional factors

Program Description:

Health Rocks! is the curriculum for 8-to-12-year-olds used in an ambitious project undertaken by Colorado State University Cooperative Extension in Jefferson County. The goal of the program nationally is to bring communities across the United States together to reduce youth tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug use.

Last November, two teens from the traditional 4-H club program in Jefferson County went to Jackson, MS, with the 4-H Program Coordinator to learn about the *Health Rocks!* program. During a 2-hour training in January, these two teen mentors taught 24 other teens (ages 14-18) about the program. They explained the teaching techniques they had learned, and demonstrated several of the activities.

The teens who had gone through this training were allowed to sign up for as many or as few as they chose of the thirty *Health Rocks!* sessions to be offered at the schools. Two or three teen trainers were scheduled for each session. Most teens participated in four to six of the sessions.

Health Rocks! was presented in three different schools with three different groups of youth. Each one met once a week for an hour and a half over a 10- week period. Every group was taught six lessons from the *Health Rocks!* curriculum, created by the National 4-H Council, including

- Oh the Pressure
- Keeping Kids Healthy
- The Media Speaks
- You Choose
- STRESS
- Commitment to Care

While at the schools, the teen trainers facilitated the activities and taught the sessions. The 4-H Program Assistant was present at all times, and rarely intervened when sensitive issues came up.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

The 4-H Assistant was required to commit only .6 FTE to this project. All the youth who signed up for the program attended on a regular basis. The *Health Rocks!* program was very well received. Only two youth were absent for more than two of the ten sessions offered. The youth who participated, both as trainers and as learners, enjoyed the program and indicated they would like to see it continue in the future. Although the curriculum brought up sensitive issues, it addressed them in a less frightening way than other prevention programs have. By using teen trainers, youth participants were able to relax and feel more at ease with the subject matter. Teachers at the elementary school were impressed with the curriculum. They even asked if they could use some of the lessons in their Health exercises.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

Health Rocks! was evaluated primarily on its impact on decisionmaking skills of the youth participants. As a result of the program 74 percent of the youth involved stated that they were more likely to think about the results of an action before making their decisions. Ninety percent stated that they “sometimes-to-always” think about the choices they make after they make them

to decipher whether it was the right decision, and 48 percent said they would "always" think about the ways they can make a decision before making it.

Comments from the 4-H Assistant who coordinated *Health Rocks* regarding the youth learners include:

- *It was interesting to find that children are stressed out by their parents' smoking habits. I've had quite a few youth tell me they want their parents to quit."*
- *During the Fact or Fable quiz game, the ball was an excellent tool to use for distraction. The youth seemed to forget they were learning facts that were out of a book, and they turned it into a game to help them remember the answers. Any kind of game/competition always helped them focus on the learning, even if they didn't realize it.*

Comments regarding the impact on the teen teachers included

- *The teens enjoyed teaching the students. Because many of them live more comfortable lifestyles than the children do, they were surprised to hear how fast some students were growing up, and how much they had been through.*
- *Most of them were prepared before they arrived to the classes. They respected their teaching responsibilities and commitment to the children and the program.*

Resource commitment:

Funding for this program came through a grant from Mississippi State University. *Health Rocks!* was a pilot program being tested in Jefferson County that will be offered on a national level in the near future. With \$5,300 to work with, a 4-H Assistant was hired to focus on implementation, development, volunteer management and marketing the program. She was paid \$12 per hour for 20 hours a week, for a total of 18 weeks, totaling \$4,320. Mississippi State University supplied curriculum. Other supplies purchased include tape, markers, glue, paper and paint, etc., totaling \$491. The only other cost incurred was staff travel, totaling \$489.56.

Collaborators:

Jefferson County 4-H collaborated with Project Prepare, a not-for-profit organization sponsoring an after-school program, to develop life skills in youth.

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

4-H Youth Development

Goal 4:

4-H will become technologically savvy so that 4-H youth and adults will thrive in a technology-based society.

“The Neighborhood GreenNet Project” or *La Red Verde de la Vecindad*

Situation:

“The Neighborhood GreenNet Project,” or *La Red Verde de la Vecindad*, is a collaborative project aimed at engaging low-income families, and in particular their children, who live in City of Santa Barbara public housing, in horticultural (green) educational projects and horticultural-based small business startups. GreenNet, in keeping with CYFAR’s technology initiative, has included the use of cutting-edge computer technology, thus providing participants access to web-based sources of information, organizing and planning tools and networking capabilities. This effort represents GreenNet’s primary intended outcome: “It is the GreenNet Project’s vision that young people and families participating in the project will develop self-sufficiency skills and abilities that will help them serve as examples of success and as agents of positive change in their communities.”

Program Description:

GreenNet is a collaboration between the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara (HACSB) and the UC 4-H Youth Development Program. Based out of the 4-H Youth Learning Through Nature Green House Garden on the Santa Barbara high School campus, GreenNet is in a central location for many residents of public housing. Santa Barbara High School has also provided the after-school use of their computer labs. Arroyo Gardens, a site owned and developed by the housing authority has been prepared to serve as a base for the next expansion stage. As a result of GreenNet, the Family Opportunity Center was established by the Housing Authority on the grounds of one of their large housing units. The center also includes a computer lab for GreenNet computer classes. GreenNet is chiefly staffed with Housing Authority’s Resident Services personnel, who are bilingual and bicultural. GreenNet has also provided local teens who have served as paid project staff the opportunity to work as activity leaders, website designers and assistant project coordinators. Likewise, teen volunteers who are performing school-required community service are staff assistants. These same teen volunteers are often hired as project staff when they complete their community service. The overwhelming majority of the teen staff are also Latino and bi-lingual, accurately representing the ethnic makeup of the majority of housing residents, which is more than 90 percent Latino. The teen staff has helped mentor and teach the project’s young participants who range in age from 5 to 12 years of age. Participants learn through hands-on, experiential green projects that utilize the 4-H YES, SERIES, TWIGS and Junior Master Gardener’s curricula. Participation in GreenNet includes teen staff and youth participants’ developing community-based environmental projects.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

GreenNet has more than seven paid part-time staff that make up a total of 2.3 FTE. GreenNet classes meet twice a week for 10 weeks. The sustainability of GreenNet has been assured, as the

program has been included in the budget of the Housing Authority. Likewise, 4-H/UC Extension in Santa Barbara County will continue to support the program by providing staff training, and by helping secure additional funding and resources to support the program. 4-H and housing program staff have also been working together to develop community support for GreenNet, sharing the program's success with community officials and decisionmakers.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

Project accomplishments have included the development of two native-plant nurseries for local restoration projects. Project staff report that many of the teen participants in GreenNet have gone on to college education, and several have elected to major in business, technology, science or science-related fields. The majority of these teens have expressed to staff that their GreenNet experience helped them develop new work skills and self-confidence. GreenNet staff recently developed the "Splash to Trash" project designed to inform and engage housing residents in local water quality and waste management issues. In developing the curriculum, they drew on 4-H SERIES, YES and CASEC (California Aquatic Science Education Consortium) curricula.

Since 1998, GreenNet has involved more than 550 youth and 350 housing resident families throughout the city of Santa Barbara. Overall, GreenNet has been successful in making positive contributions to the community and the agencies involved. GreenNet has helped develop the capacity of the Housing Authority's Resident Services division and has helped the local 4-H program more effectively serve an urban community.

Resource Commitment:

External funding included:

\$26,000.00 from the US Department of Justice

\$10,000 raised in donations from local businesses

\$8,000 from RREA funds

Approximately \$8,000 money raised from the sale of native plants

Collaborators:

Collaborators included:

Resident Services, Housing Authority, City of Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara High School

Contact Person(s):

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

Natural Resources Environmental Management
Community Resource & Economic Development
Agriculture
Leadership & Volunteer Development
4-H Youth Development
Family Development & Resource Management

WA 4-H – T4: Today’s Teens Teaching Technology

Situation:

One of the primary goals of Washington State University’s Center to Bridge the Digital Divide is to facilitate the deployment of a sustainable statewide youth computer literacy and workforce preparedness training initiative through the powerful, community-based 4-H youth education network. The Center’s goals are directly in line with the *KIDS COUNT SNAPSHOT*: “Connecting Kids to Technology: Challenges and Opportunities” article in which authors state,

Because 21st-century literacy is so important, it is imperative that governments, industry, and philanthropic organizations support programs that provide access and training in underserved communities, particularly for young people.

Program Description:

The 4-H-T4 program is part of the Washington State 4-H Computer Technology Initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and administered by WSU’s Center to Bridge the Digital Divide. The project’s primary goal is to provide underserved communities with computers, printers, connectivity and training, so that the community teens can teach computer literacy skills to individuals—youth through senior citizens. An essential element woven throughout the program is to replace tech-savvy youth, working with adult partners, in leadership positions. Through the first phase of this project, teens from two Snohomish County 4-H Clubs, wrote their own train-the-trainer curriculum and taught 32 teens and adults from across the state how to build computers in 4 days. Thirty-two computers were built at the workshop, with the remaining 28 to be built back in the community labs, involving additional tech-savvy youth.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

Project Coordination is .66 FTE for the statewide project. Each of the six community sites has an Extension Faculty or staff person responsible for overall lab coordination, training and evaluation. The computer-building summit was an intense 4-day workshop. Upon returning to their local communities, each county team held building workshops. The Community Labs will be open in mid-September, at least 8-10 hours a week, offering classroom instruction, open lab time and research.

Accomplishments & Impacts:

The following impacts were measured using the WSU Life Skills Evaluation program. The most significant increases on the pre/post written surveys collected from the teen instructors measured growth in the following life skills:

Because of my participation in WA 4-H-T4 I am able to:

- “Make a presentation” —an increase from 17 percent to 75 percent of the teen instructors.
- “Clearly state my thoughts, feelings, and ideas to others” —an increase from 41 percent to 58 percent.
- “Treat people who are different from me with respect” —an increase of 17 percent.
- “Organize a group to reach its goal” — a 41 to 85 percent increase of the teen participants.
- “Get others to share in leadership” — increased 17 percent.
- “Work out problems that are presented to me”— increased 41 to 66 percent.
- “Contribute as a member of a team” — increased 16 percent.
- “Accept responsibility for doing a job” — increased from 17 to 75 percent of the instructors.

Qualitatively, youth completed the following statement—”The most important thing I have gained from attending the Build Summit is”—“Teaching experience” “Leadership” and “To be a teacher.” One male youth wrote, “I really enjoyed teaching the computer building class.” Adults wrote, “The youth did a great job of teaching!”

The teen participants were also given the WSU Life Skills Evaluation pre/post written survey instrument. Eighty-six percent of the teen participants felt they had developed new skills during the 4-day training. Participants completed the statement, “The most important thing I have gained from attending the Build Summit is”—“Knowledge to teach others.” “Building a computer is both fun and challenging.” “To pay attention.”

“Because of my participation in the Summit I am able to”—

- “Listen carefully to what others say” — a 25 percent increase.
- “Accept responsibility for doing a job” — an increase from 25 to 87 percent of the teen participants.
- “Work out problems that are presented to me — an increase of 25 to 69 percent of the participants.
- “List my options before making a decision”— a 19 percent increase.

Resource Commitment:

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation - \$230,874.00; Microsoft Corporation - \$331,207, software; Blue Cross - 58 monitors.

Collaborators:

Nooksack Valley School District, Lincoln County, Thurston County, Salishan Learning Center, Clarkston School District and Klickitat County Learning Center and Yakama Tribal Community

Contact Person:

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Base program areas to which this program applies:
4-H Youth Development

Youth Financial Education Website Review Project

Situation:

One of the major concerns of all educators is the proliferation of information. Cooperative Extension is respected as a leader in the area of information education because of its up-to-date, unbiased information. One of the biggest challenges of the future is to evaluate the immense amount of available information that is available and make recommendations to Extension educators who can suggest credible sources of information to their clientele.

Program Description:

To identify a research base of appropriate website choices to enhance financial education for youth, the researchers initiated a project that would include both youth and adult evaluators. A national assessment of family economics and 4-H youth development specialists identified 92 potential financial education websites. Twenty-six websites were determined to be appropriate financial education sites for young people. The sites were visited and categorized into four categories: (1) auto buying sites; (2) multiple task sites; (3) saving and investing sites; and (4) entrepreneur sites. A checklist instrument for youth was piloted by a small group of high school students. 4-H members in Colorado, ages 14-18, made up the panel of youth evaluators. A majority of them had a lot of experience with computers (68 percent) but much lower experience with money management (31 percent). Each website was critiqued according to established criteria: design, navigability, links, content, and educational value. As an additional evaluation check, financial education experts were asked to evaluate the same websites. The adult educators rated websites on: authority; purpose and coverage; accuracy and validity; importance; timeliness; objectivity; and educational value. Each of the sites was evaluated by a minimum of three young people. Three adults also evaluated most of the sites.

Stakeholder Satisfaction:

The challenge facing all educators is to insure that technology lives up to its promise. 4-H agents, Extension educators and classroom teachers must work together to identify the most appropriate technology, including educational websites. Evaluation plus creative application will determine “authentic activities” that lead students from simply clicking a mouse to higher-order skills and problem-solving opportunities. County faculty can use the research process and the research results in many ways, such as: (1) establishing county collaboration teams to address local financial education for youth; (2) providing research-based information to local youth financial education coalitions; (3) giving programs at 4-H clubs; (4) providing local educators a teaching resource that they can trust; and (5) teaching young people how to evaluate web-based information.

Accomplishments and Impacts:

Two of the 26 websites evaluated were no longer operational by the time the data were analyzed. Of the 24 websites, seven were highly rated as an educational resource by youth and adults:

- **www.kiplinger.com/kids:** This website has a number of short pieces designed for youth (and their parents). Topics include managing student loans, teaching children how to save money and a piggy bank calculator.
- **www.pathfinder.com/money:** *Money Magazine's* website is actually geared to adults. It does have several sources of information such as the "Money 101" section and the "Money/Fortune Stock Tournament" that would be valuable to young people, especially if they were given a simulated youth-adult identity and given a decisionmaking assignment.
- **www.cibc.com/smartstart:** This website is offered by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (which is not clear when you enter the site). It is bright and cheerful, but very elementary. The "Allowance Room" and "Money Machine" are recommended for both those under age 12 and for those ages 13-18, which is too wide a target audience. The room where young people could select items they wished to save money for was very much a boy's room.
- **www.themint.org:** "The Mint" is a joint effort between the Northwestern Mutual Life Foundation and the National Council on Economic Education. It has specific exercises designed for middle school and high school students, including starting a business, investing and using credit cards.
- **www.yahooligans.com:** This website is trademarked by Yahoo! Inc. It is designed for kids, but its home page does not suggest money management topics. Searching for "investing" did uncover a number of topic areas.
- **www.homefair.com:** Homefair.com is a for-profit commercial site on the Internet. The content is intended to enable consumers to make more informed choices about relocation, mortgages and related topics. Topics that might be of interest to young people (again as a youth-adult simulation) include finding an apartment and finding a job.
- **www.quicken.com:** This site is maintained by the company that produces Quicken[®] software. Checking for auto insurance quotes turned up a nonexistent page.

Resource commitment: N/A

Collaborators:

Campus specialists in 4-H Youth Development and Financial Management; faculty and staff in Department of Design & Merchandising; Office of Regulatory Compliance; county agents who recruited youth Web site evaluators; youth pilot participants and website evaluators; and, adult financial education experts around the country.

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Base program areas to which this program applies:

4-H Youth Development

Family Development and Resource Management
